

EXHIBIT 3
DATE 3/27/09
SB 100

March 26, 2009

Montana House of Representatives
Federal Relations, Energy and Telecommunications Committee
State Capitol
Helena, MT 59620

RE: Strong Support for SB - 100

Dear Federal Relations, Energy and Telecommunications Committee Members:

As an independent economic development professional serving the great people of Custer, Powder River, Rosebud and Treasure Counties, I see on a daily basis the quality of life benefits that Coal Board funding brings to "Coal Country."

In "Coal Country" the need is great but the funding resources are few. The Coal Board is one of only a few resources that can immediately assist cities and counties being impacted by coal development. Currently, the back log of Coal Board Applications is over \$2.7 million. I believe this is the first time in over nine years this shortage of funds has occurred. Again, proof that the need is not only great but increasing.

The Mayor of Colstrip has stated that "no single industry in our modern history has had such a positive impact as Coal has to Montana." Responsible natural resource development can be done and the coal industry is proving that. The coal severance tax has contributed 100's of millions of dollars to Montana. I believe the permanent trust fund currently has over \$500 million dollars in it, not counting TSEP contributions. A small increase in the Coal Board funding is only pocket change compared to the benefits shared with the entire Treasure State.

I know passing SB - 100 will be mutually beneficial and I encourage you to do that.

Thank you,

Jim Atchison
Executive Director